



**Date:** May 23, 2019

**To:** Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager  
**Through:** W. Bowman Ferguson, Deputy City Manager  
**From:** Steven Hicks, Director, General Services Department  
**Subject:** Public Art Contract for Black Wall Street Gardens with Artists Stephen Hayes and David Wilson

### **Executive Summary**

A group of engaged downtown residents, in collaboration with the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD), Durham City/County Planning Department (Planning), and the General Services Department (GSD), have developed proposed design improvements to the four city-owned parcels along 102 W. Main Street, W. Mangum Street, and W. Morgan Street commonly known as Black Wall Street Gardens (BWSG). One of the signature improvements recommended is the incorporation of Public Art into the space.

Over the past two years the Artist Selection Panel, the Cultural Advisory Board (CAB) and Public Art Committee (PAC) and city staff engaged in discussions surrounding BWSG public art opportunities. Local businesses and stakeholders along Parrish Street have expressed support. The installation of public art achieves the goal of activating and enhancing engagement in the public realm. The art will reflect the culture of the Durham community. The piece will also commemorate and illuminate the importance of Black Wall Street and the legacy of Durham's African-American business community. These entities reached consensus to recommend hiring artists Stephen Hayes and David Wilson to design, fabricate, and install public art at the site. The lead artists will hire an apprentice artist, Calvin Brett, further developing our local talent.

Pending City Council approval, the art installation will occur in September 2019, in line with the Black Wall Street Homecoming--an annual emerging entrepreneurs' networking conference. Celebrations around the installation of this art will also dovetail with Durham's 150 sesquicentennial celebration.

### **Recommendation**

The General Services Department recommends that City Council authorize the City Manager to execute a contract for Public Art in an amount not to exceed \$50,000.00 for the Black Wall Street Gardens with Stephen Hayes and David Wilson.

### **Background**

During the last year the City of Durham has been making improvements to Black Wall Street Gardens a publicly-owned greenspace on West Main Street. For two decades this site has served as a public open space, with a growing number of independent small performances and gatherings. The site was identified in the City's 2014 Downtown Open Space Plan, with the goal to develop a linear park connecting City Hall, the Kress Building, and other redevelopment sites along Main Street along Mangum Street, framed by Main and Parrish

Streets. The public art installation will serve as an extension of recent improvements along Parrish Street, most notably the pergolas installed on Parrish Street and Mangum Street along with recently installed hardscape, lighting, landscaping, and walkway improvements.

The city issued an RFQ for Black Wall Street Gardens with a project budget of \$30,000. The first RFQ received 22 artist entries through an online platform. The PAC, artist selection panel, and city staff determined, through consensus, that the pool of applicants did not present the quality appropriate to achieve the desired project outcome. Conversations with these groups and artists led staff to believe that the funding amount was insufficient to achieve the project quality desired. A project budget increase was recommended and a new RFQ was issued for \$50,000.

A second RFQ issuance via the Café platform resulted in 95 high quality submissions. The larger applicant pool had higher-caliber artists with stronger portfolios. The selection committee narrowed the field of artists based on the following criterion: artistic excellence, project management, community engagement, affiliation with community, and work based in the African-American experience.

The selection committee recommended Stephen Hayes and David Wilson, two Durham based artists who identify as African-American males be hired for the commission. The artists' initial proposal involves an environmental and interactive design, which will be presented for PAC committee review. The contractual agreement includes a mentee to assist with the project.

The artist team fits the criteria requested by the PAC's Task Force on Capacity Building for Local Artists' letter to the City regarding BWSG.

### **Issues/Analysis**

Inclusion of public art will enhance downtown business connectivity along Main Street and alignment with multiple City of Durham adopted plans:

- Citywide Strategic Plan goals of a “Connected, Diverse and Engaged Communities are supported by a robust public art program.
- The Citywide Sustainability Roadmap outlines strategies to support efforts that celebrate and leverage the economic value of local historic resources, such as Black Wall Street Gardens.
- The Downtown Master Plan establishes a goal of “activating the street-level...with continuing streetscape improvements including public art, throughout downtown.” An established goal is utilized arts and culture to increase understanding and communication among people of diverse backgrounds, noting that “arts and cultural activities can be critical in building bridges among diverse communities” and that “arts and culture can provide young people with positive social outlets.”
- The Durham Comprehensive Plan establishes a goal to “encourage the incorporation of public art in new development projects, particularly in Downtown and Compact Neighborhood Tiers.”

- On October 20, 2014, City Council adopted the Downtown Open Space Plan, and identified 102 W. Main Street in the plan as a site to be developed “as the southern node of an enhanced linear park connecting City Hall to Main Street.” Currently, the greenspace serves primarily as a connection between the City Hall Area and Main Street, and is a popular urban open space for residents and visitors.
- On November 21, 2011, the Durham City Council adopted Resolution 9788 to establish a Public Art Policy and percent-for-art program in order to create and enhance the recreational and cultural environment in the City by incorporating the works of artists into the City’s capital improvements. The Percent-for-art Program authorizes the City Manager to recommend up to one percent of the proposed General Capital Improvement Project Budget (CIP) to be set aside for the installation of public art at the sites of major capital improvements and geographical target areas such as the Downtown Development tier and designated gateways to the city.

The Cultural and Public Art Program has built into the project schedule numerous points of collaboration with stakeholders including City Administration, CAB, PAC, and local businesses along Parrish Street.

**Alternatives**

City Council could determine to not authorize entering into a contract for public art at the Black Wall Street Gardens. Or, Council could recommend alternatives to the funding amount.

**Financial Impact**

Funding in the amount up \$50,000 is available within the existing project budget. Funds for this public art project are in project code 3000H000-728600-70003.

**UBE Summary**

Not Applicable

**Attachments:**

- BWSG Task Force Team Letter
- Schematic Design and Apprenticeship Proposal
- Artist Contract
- Request for Qualifications (First)
- Request for Qualifications (Second)